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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
2 June 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Although the government is moving to reassert its authority in Hue with troops of the 1st Division under General Nhuan, the loyalty of these troops is still very much in doubt.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Allied operations are making only sporadic contact with the enemy (Para. 1). Captured enemy documents indicate the Communists are emphasizing the training of regimental-size units in South Vietnam (Paras. 2-3). Reports of poor Viet Cong morale continue (Paras. 4-5). MACV confirms PAVN 24th Regiment in Kontum Province, bringing total confirmed PAVN strength in South Vietnam to 30,810 (Paras. 6-7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Government control of the situation in Hue is still in doubt. First Division troops have entered the city but have not disarmed the "struggle" forces. The loyalty of the 1st Division troops and leadership is uncertain (Paras. 1-2). Rebel forces are reported to be concentrated in the Citadel area on the north side of the river, while GVN troops remain in the newer section of the city on the river's south bank (Para. 3). Buddhist leaders in Saigon appear to have accepted the GVN offer of increased civilian participation in government. Whether their more militant followers will accept the settlement is still unclear (Para. 7).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: The rumor of a Ho Chi Minh trip to Peking is based on the

reported remarks of a DRV Foreign Ministry official (Para. 2). A French representative in Hanoi reports diplomatic scuttlebutt that the North Vietnamese Army is being readied for intervention in the South (Paras. 3-5). The same source reports on bomb damage in the DRV (Paras. 6-9).

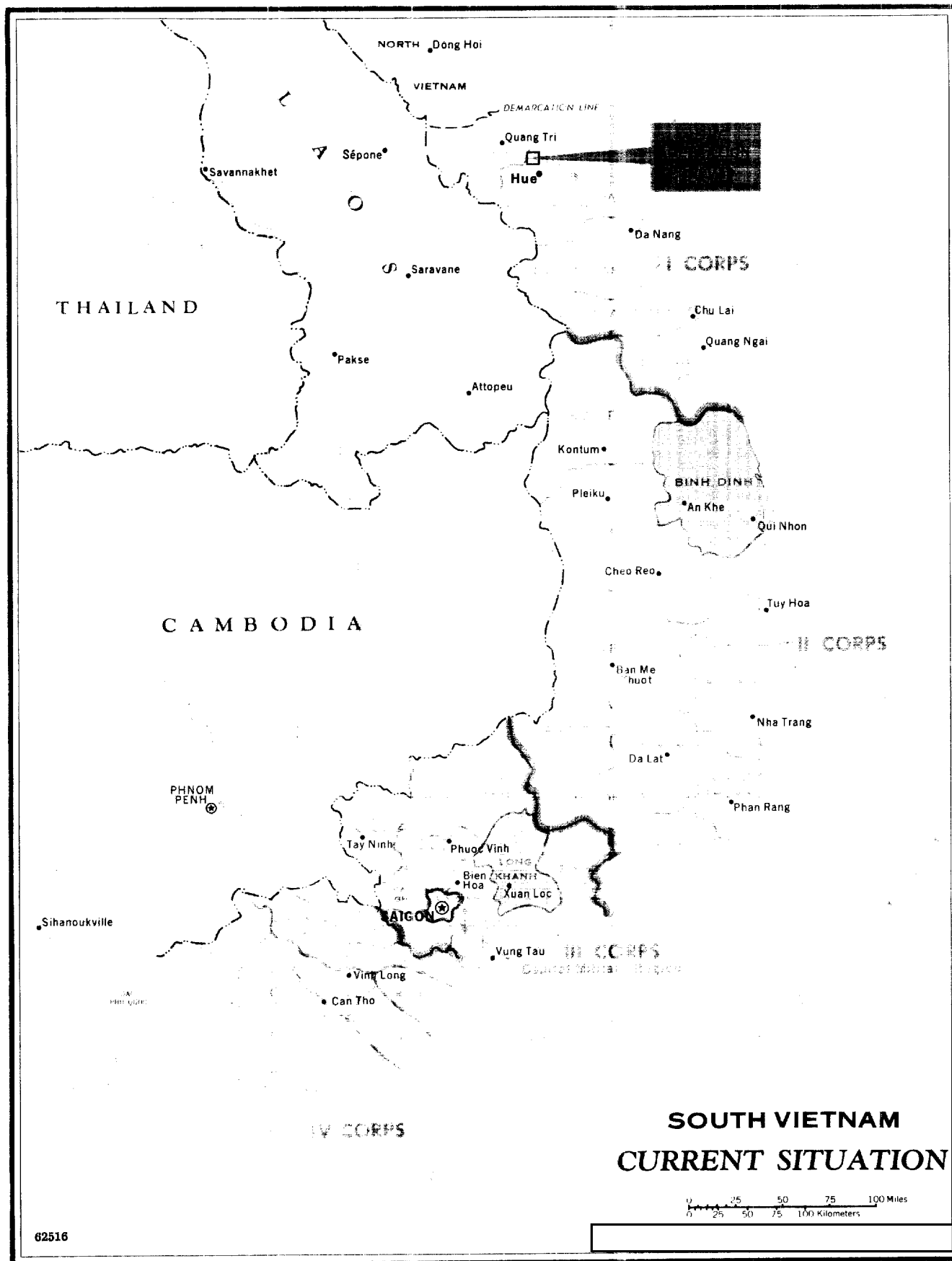
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied operations continue at a relatively high level. Only sporadic contact is being made with enemy forces, however. USMC task force elements began Operation BEAVER 15 miles northwest of Hue in Thua Thien Province on 1 June. This is an effort to protect rice production as well as a long-term search-and-destroy operation.

Training of Regimental Size Communist Units in South Vietnam

2. Two enemy documents recently captured in Binh Dinh Province indicate the added emphasis the Communists are placing on the training of regimental size units in South Vietnam. One of these documents is a directive on the training program for the 22nd PAVN Regiment. The second includes a format for a training report, a circular on training schedules, and a plan of instruction for units on assigned combat missions.

3. These documents generally agree with previous information regarding the training activities of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units. The papers emphasize the training of cadres as a key factor to success, the need to motivate the individual soldier, and the quality of the instructors. The emphasis on the need for training in the 22nd Regiment, moreover, tends to corroborate earlier reports that this North Vietnamese Regiment as well as other units of the 610th Division, has been greatly augmented by locally recruited troops.

Viet Cong Morale

4. Reports of poor Viet Cong morale continue. Interrogation of a Viet Cong prisoner, who was captured in Binh Dinh Province on 9 May, reveals that morale in his unit was low due to the lack of food

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and the fear of friendly forces' firepower. The prisoner stated that his unit, a local force platoon, had the mission of training recruits. Declining morale among members of the training cadre could hamper the effectiveness of the recruiting effort and the over-all training program of this unit.

5. Translation of a Viet Cong document dated 30 January and captured in mid-March in Long Khanh Province outlines Viet Cong problems in the Viet Cong Military Region VII. The document points out that the shortage of personnel, the inability to secure replacements, and the extensive use of troops in agricultural production to overcome food shortages are all having an effect on the troops' morale. The document states that the Viet Cong fear they will face further "logistical difficulties" because the allied forces will increase air strikes, artillery fire, and the use of toxic chemicals. This is the second captured document that makes reference to the shortage of Viet Cong personnel in this area.

PAVN 24th Regiment Confirmed in Kontum Province

6. MACV has accepted another North Vietnamese Army regiment--the 24th--in South Vietnam. The 24th has a strength of 1,800 men and is located in Kontum Province. It is the 14th confirmed NVA regiment to date in South Vietnam. This unit is believed to have been trained by the 304th NVA Division. It began its infiltration in October 1965 and arrived in South Vietnam last February.

7. Total confirmed NVA strength in South Vietnam now stands at 30,810. Another 4,200 men in various units are carried in the probable or possible categories in the order of battle. In addition, there are a number of units which have been reported

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but which are not included in the above mentioned categories. There is presently insufficient evidence on these reported units to include them in the order of battle but, if they were included, the total number of North Vietnamese troops now in South Vietnam might be as high as 50,000.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Troops of the ARVN 1st Division have entered Hue but have yet to establish GVN control over dissident groups in the northern city. Meanwhile in Saigon, Buddhist willingness to go along with the agreement reached with the government yesterday remains unclear.

Hue

2. The issue of government authority in Hue is still very much in doubt. While 1st Division troops have entered the city and occupied several key locations, armed "struggle" groups continue to commit acts of violence. The loyalty of the 1st Division units to the GVN is questionable and there has as yet been no confrontation with dissident forces to put it to the test. General Nhuan, commander of the 1st Division, is reported to have had a conference with Tri Quang at noon on 2 June (Vietnam time) and announced that his sympathies lay with the "struggle" forces.

3. Elements of the ARVN 1st Division rolled into Hue under the command of General Nhuan in the early morning hours of 2 June (Vietnam time). The US consul there reported that tanks and armored personnel carriers of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 7th armored Regiment, took up positions around 1st Division headquarters and General Nhuan's home. Elements of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, and the "Hoc Bao" Company were said to be guarding Radio Hue and the city's major intersections. A reinforced company of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry, was assigned to defend US installations. This is the same unit that deserted its post in front of the US Consulate shortly before its destruction by the "struggle" forces. Government troops are generally deployed in the administrative section of the city along the south side of the river. The rebel group is concentrated on the north side of the river in the old, walled section of the city known as the Citadel. According to the US consul, the rebel force consists of less than 1,000, mostly students and youths armed with carbines, pistols and grenades. Their headquarters is said to be sandbagged and defended with machine guns.

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4. Elements of the dissident group appeared on the south side of the river during the late afternoon of 2 June (Vietnam time) and sacked the home of District Chief De. The US consul reports that a mob of about 100 students attacked and looted the De residence which is less than 50 yards from the MACV compound. A group of ARVN soldiers was observed nearby, but they made no effort to prevent the attack.

5. Tri Quang on 2 June addressed another letter to President Johnson, alleging that the President is responsible for the attempt on the life of Thich Thien Minh yesterday because of continued US support of the Thieu/Ky regime. Tri Quang has issued no statement on the apparent agreement reached between the government and Buddhist leaders in Saigon.

6. Latest reports on province chief Colonel Khoa indicate that he has assembled a large force of Popular and Regional Force troops on the outskirts of Hue and is disarming all persons who attempt to enter the city.

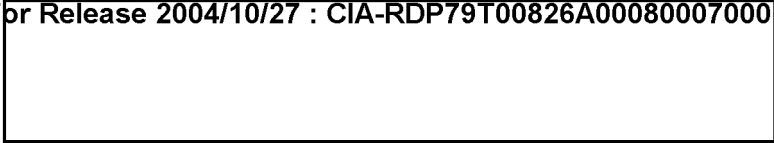
Saigon

7. While confusion still exists on the issue of the resignation of Thieu and Ky, Buddhist Institute leaders appear to have accepted the GVN offer of increased civilian representation in government as the price for calling off the "struggle" movement. Whether the Institute leadership can get their more militant followers to accept this compromise is still unclear.

8. Members of the Buddhist monks and nuns association have condemned the negotiated settlement with the government, according to press reports, and continue to call for the immediate dismissal of Thieu and Ky. They are said to be planning more suicides to underline their protest. On the other hand, a group of 2,000 Buddhists marched in a funeral procession for two of the persons who had committed

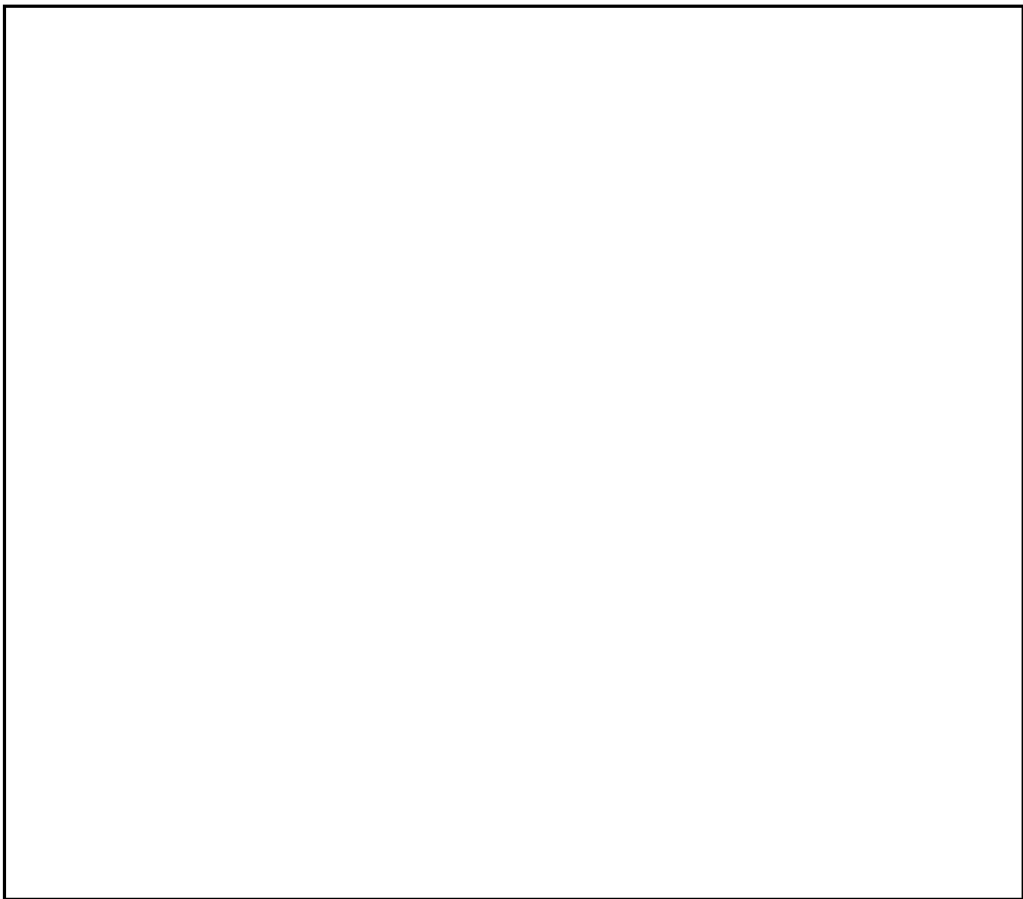
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self-immolation and the event was described by the US Embassy as peaceful. No demonstrations were reported during the day, and GVN security forces have been removed from the area surrounding the Buddhist Institute.

9. The government announced that the enlargement of the ruling Directorate to include ten civilians will become effective on 6 June. It was also reported that a joint Civilian-Military Advisory Council will be established on 19 June. This is apparently the "shadow parliament" of which Prime Minister Ky spoke to US Embassy officials yesterday. It is to consist of 150 persons and will have the role of "providing guidance" to the government.



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The US Embassy in Paris has obtained some recent information passed to the French Foreign Ministry by its representatives in Hanoi. Some of this information appears to be accurate, some is of unknown accuracy, and the rest is merely current rumors floating around the diplomatic community in Hanoi.

2. One of these reports, dated 27 May, stated that an Eastern European diplomat in Hanoi had been told by a North Vietnamese deputy minister of foreign affairs that the rumor of Ho Chi Minh's trip to Communist China is true. No details were given. This is probably the source of the earlier French Press Agency report of Ho's trip. It is, however, the closest we have come yet to an official confirmation of such a trip. A trip by Ho to China would suggest that some new crisis has arisen that requires his personal intervention with the Chinese leadership. One possible problem might be the flow of Soviet supplies across China to North Vietnam. Problems have arisen in the past in this area. Ho's chief lieutenants, however, have been able to work out adequate compromises in the past to ensure a continued flow of this vital equipment.

PAVN Military Developments

3. Another report from the French representative in Hanoi, dated 28 May, passed along rumors of the "possible intervention of North Vietnamese Army in military operations in South Vietnam"--presumably the open invasion of the South is meant. These rumors are based on three considerations, according to the French source. The first is that "the entire North Vietnamese Army, with the exception of two divisions which guard the coast line of the Red River Delta, is assembled between the 17th and 18th parallels." Second, "steps for the mobilization of manpower, including 17-year-old youths, have recently been carried out." Third, contacts are supposed to have been made between elements of the South Vietnamese 1st Division in Hue and the high command of the North Vietnamese Army.

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4. This appears to be nothing more than wild speculation by the diplomatic community in Hanoi. There is no evidence of a major buildup of North Vietnamese troops just north of the Demilitarized Zone. There is no evidence that Hanoi has made a decision to intervene openly in the South with its army. There is also no evidence that the ARVN 1st Division has contacted Hanoi. In fact, its commander, General Nhuan, is considered to be pro-Saigon. It is possible that some elements of the 1st Division who joined the "struggle" groups may have made some effort to contact the Viet Cong, but we have seen no good evidence that this actually happened. (See Paras. 10-13 of this section for the latest on Hanoi's attitude toward the situation in South Vietnam.)

5. As for the mobilization of manpower, including 17-year-olds, this is not a new development. Hanoi has been drafting 17-year-olds for almost a year and has greatly increased its military strength during the same period. There is no indication that the pace of induction into the army has been speeded up substantially during the past month or so.

Bomb Damage

6. A third report from the same source, dated 26 May, commented on bomb damage and repair of major facilities struck within the past few weeks. He stated that as of 26 May the important Hanoi - Lang Son rail line was functioning normally. A major bridge on this line at Bac Giang was knocked out on 6 May after repeated strikes during the previous two-week period. It was estimated that temporary repairs to the bridge could have been completed within two to four weeks from 6 May.

7. The source also stated that the Hai Duong bridge on the Hanoi-Haiphong rail line--which was destroyed on 17 April--had not been repaired. It has been replaced by a floating bamboo bridge which was capable of handling heavy truck traffic. Rail traffic between Hanoi and Haiphong, however, required

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transloading at Hai Duong. It had been estimated that emergency temporary repairs to the Hai Duong bridge could have been completed in four weeks from the date of destruction.

8. The source speculated that the Vietnamese apparently have given up attempting to repair the Uong Bi thermal power plant, which was struck on 18 and 28 April. According to the source, Russian technicians who were in charge of operating the station--the largest electrical power station in the DRV--had returned home. It was estimated from an analysis of the bomb damage photography of Uong Bi that it could have been restored to partial operation in one or two months from the date of the last attack.

9. The observer further commented that the clearest result of US strike activity in North Vietnam was the loss of manpower for the economy as a result of diverting large numbers of personnel to bomb damage repair work and work on the defense systems.

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